

GOV. JOSEPH DUNCAN HOME  
JACKSONVILLE ILLINOIS

Morgan Co

HABS NO. 25-8

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ILL,  
69-JACVI  
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*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
CENTRAL ILLINOIS DISTRICT NO. 25

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
EDGAR E. LUNDEEN, DISTRICT OFFICER  
BLOOMINGTON ILLINOIS

The Governor Duncan Home -- First of its kind in Illinois.  
JACKSONVILLE, MORGAN Co

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By Edith Kirby Wilson, Jacksonville, Ill. March 1934

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On May 13, 1828 Joseph Duncan, of Illinois, whose birth place and early life was in Paris, Kentucky, married Elizabeth Caldwell Smith, of New York City. She was a grand-daughter of Rev. James Caldwell, of New Jersey, a Chaplain in the Revolutionary Army, who was killed shortly after his wife, Hannah Ogden, had been deliberately shot by the Hessians under the command of the British. Their daughter, Hannah Ogden Caldwell, married James R. Smith, of New York City. Their daughter, Elizabeth Caldwell Smith, after the death of her mother, made her home in Washington, D. C. with her sister, Mrs. Matthew St. Clair Clark, whose husband was for many years Clerk of the House of Representatives, and their home was a popular social center.

From a diary left by Elizabeth Caldwell Smith, we learn that it was at a dinner party at this home, situated directly across from the White House, that she met Gen. Joseph Duncan, a member of Congress from Illinois. In her reminiscences Mrs. Duncan wrote, "I was introduced to General Duncan from Illinois by William Carroll, of Carrollton. Henry Clay at dinner told me of his (Duncan's) goodness to his mother - said he was not only a good looking fellow but was a good son and brother, having taken care of his Mother and educated his

sister and brothers - after the death of his father leaving him twelve years of age and the third eldest in the family."

The acquaintance thus formed proved mutually agreeable, and after a short engagement they were married in the home of her sister, Mrs. Clark, in Washington, and it was this house which was the plan afterward used in the planning of the interior of their home at Jacksonville, Illinois.

When Mr. Duncan had spent some eight years in Congress, representing his adopted State, Illinois, he returned to Jacksonville on August 1, 1830 to remain. Some six trips by stage and boat had been made by the young couple during the first years of their wedded life. The most interesting of their varied experiences, as told by them in diaries and letters, are still in the possession of the family.

In the fall of 1834, Mr. Duncan was elected Governor of Illinois, and began the building of his home in Jacksonville. After a year it was completed and he and his family moved into it, having lived just a few hundred feet to the west of it, in a small frame cottage built for their temporary shelter. Mrs. Duncan describes this cottage thus in her diary: "It stood at the edge of the grove, just west of the present home surrounded by elm trees from which we gave it the name of "Elm Grove". This cottage was the first frame house (1830) in the village. Tho rude in exterior it often offered shelter to the weary traveler. It was in truth "Wedded lives" first home."

In the new house, and then the Governor's mansion, many guests of note have been entertained. A letter to his wife from Mr. Duncan, while in Washington, informs her that, "Mr. Alexander Hamilton and his wife start to Illinois in their own carriage in a few days - on a trip of pleasure. I have invited them to visit you and remain in our home while they stay in Jacksonville." (1836)

"In June 1837," another entry in Mrs. Duncan's diary reads, "we entertained Daniel Webster, his wife and niece. Mr. Duncan gave him a barbecue down in the grove - northwest of the house; roasted a steer whole." (The old tree under which he, Webster, stood, to deliver his speech, was in the center of the intersection of LaFayette Avenue and Webster Avenue, but has of recent years been cut down.) The diary continues, "Webster made a most eloquent speech, as was his wont. He took people by storm. Cheer after cheer echoed and re-echoed thro the grove."

The names of Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, O.H. Browning, John A. McClernand, Col. John J. Hardin, all occurred in the list of friends and associates of the Duncans, and enjoyed their hospitality, in its warm, Southern genuineness, in the Duncan home.

Mrs. Duncan speaks of the interior plan of the Duncan House as drawn from Mrs. Matthew St. Clair Clark's home, only made smaller, and the exterior drawn from the first plan and early home of Governor Duncan at Paris, Kentucky.

From letters of a cousin, Mr. James C. Finley, we learn that he came west from his eastern home, to take charge of Mr. Duncan's affairs in Jacksonville while Mr. Duncan was in Congress. He tells of the beginning of the building of the home, which he is directing - "On November 9, 1833 the masons were going on very well with the foundations." On Dec. 27, 1833 again Mr. Finley writes, "Cassels saw the man today with whom he contracted for the hewed timber, and says that they are all ready for delivery and will be on the ground by the first of January." The joists of the house are huge pieces of oak. The siding of the house is all of black walnut.

The records of the family show that in the basement of the house the Duncans housed the first Portuguese family, coming to Jacksonville as fugitives from their persecution in Madeira. They and some of their children served the Duncans until they were able to obtain work and a home of their own. Their name was "Vasconcellos".

The Duncan home was always in the Duncan family until its sale to the Rev. James Caldwell Chapter D. A. R. in 1920. A daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Duncans', Mrs. Julia Duncan Kirby, was born, married and died in this home of her parents. Her husband continued to live there until his death, and its final purchase by the D. A. R. Chapter, whose founder was Mrs. Kirby.

Edith A. Wilson

(Approved)

Logan E. Lundeen

Revised 1926 by H.C.F.

## 1. Name of Owner and Occupant:

Rev. James Caldwell Chapter D.A.R.

## 2. Date of present Ownership and Occupancy:

1920 to present. Deed signed May 1, 1920.

## 3. Names of previous Owners and Occupants with Dates:

Governor Joseph Duncan 1834-1844; Mrs. Joseph Duncan 1844-62; Joseph Duncan, Jr., 1862-82; Julia Duncan Kirby 1882-96; Judge Edward P. Kirby 1896-1918; Mrs. Lucinda Gallaher Kirby 1918-20; Note: From March 1, 1865 to 1875 the house was occupied by Illinois State Institution for the Feeble-Minded, the first of its kind in the State.

## 4. Alterations during present Ownership and Occupancy and Names of Architects, Builders, with Dates:

Marble tablets in vestibule, Main Hall and Memorial Room erected in the Spring of 1922, dedicated Flag Day, June 14, 1922. Clarence Buckingham, Supervising Architect. Vermont Marble Company, Contractor. In 1928 partition between two east rooms of first story removed and the Assembly Room provided, steel work required for support. Also, other structural steel work erected for support of wall of Memorial Room. Other improvements made in building in minor way, Clarence Buckingham, Architect; A. L. Black, Builder.

## 5. Earlier allocations, with Dates, and Names of Builders and Architects:

In 1882 certain minor partitions of first story altered, small porches built on the front and East, house put in repair. In 1862 the four wooden Mid-Victorian fireplaces were erected and the cast iron grate, hearth added to the original Belgian marble mantel in the Assembly Room. In 1899 very extensive additions and alterations were made, minor partitions of main hall changed, 3 story porch, east porch and porte-cochere were added, minor partition changes made in second story, entire rear wing built on and general repairs made, slate roofs added, front and rear center dormers added. I. C. Coleman, Jacksonville, builder 1882. Coleman and Pierson, Architects 1899.

## 6. Date of original construction, with names of builder and Architect:

1833-34.- Architect unknown. Mr. Cassels was the builder; James C. Finley was the manager of the work.

## 7. Personages and Events associated with Home:

## a. during present occupancy:

William Jennings Bryan; Anne Rogers Minor,  
President General of the D.A.R. Dedication of  
the D.A.R. Chapter House, being the first  
D.A.R. Chapter House in Illinois; Bryan Lunch-  
eon; Illinois State Bankers Luncheon.

## b. during previous occupancy:

Alexander Hamilton and wife visit in 1836.  
Daniel Webster and wife visit in June 1837;  
Public Speech in the grove by Daniel Webster;  
Abraham Lincoln; Stephen A. Douglas; General  
John A. McClernand.

## 8. Additional Comment:

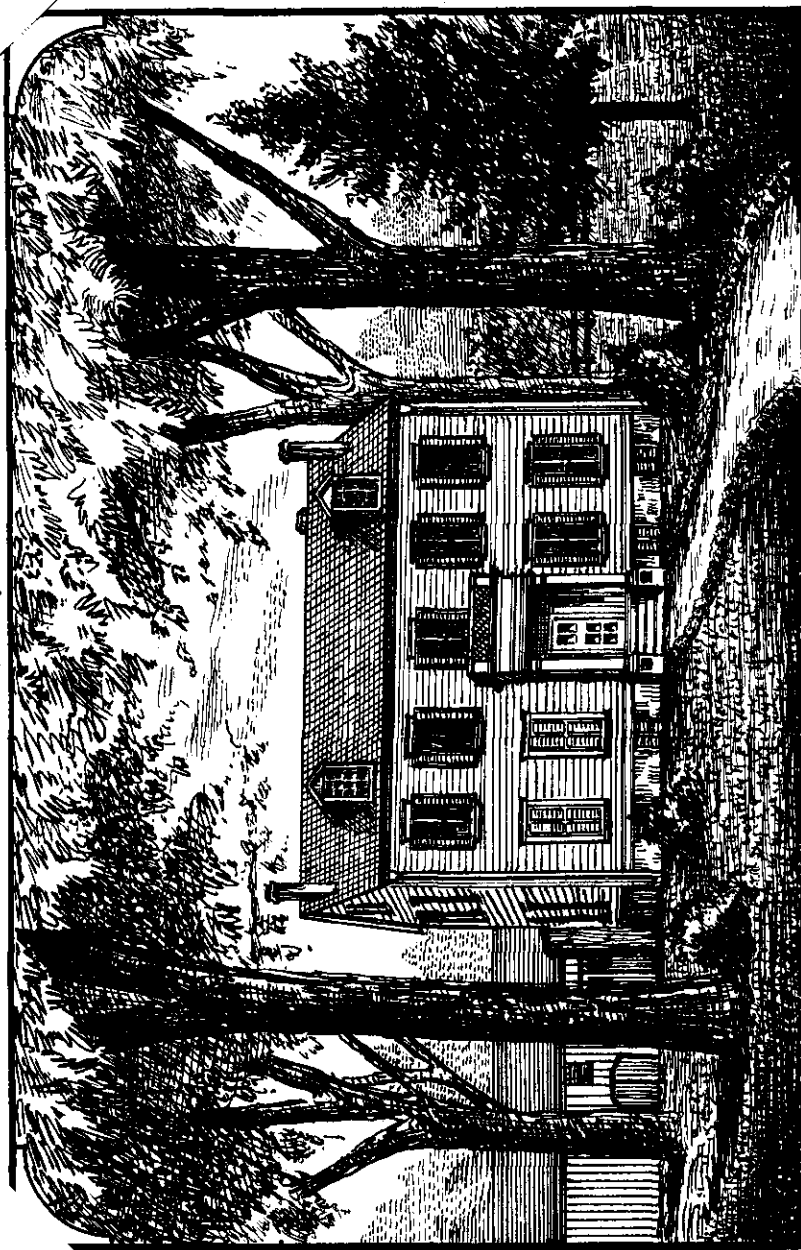
If outmoded porches, etc., were removed, house  
could easily be restored to its original dignity.

*Clarence Buckingham*

HABS  
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DATA PAGE  
NO NEGATIVE

-1834-



RESIDENCE OF GOV. JOSEPH DUNCAN, JACKSONVILLE, ILL.  
FROM ILLUSTRATION IN BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JOSEPH DUNCAN BY  
JULIA DUNCAN KIBBY.--COPIED BY CLARENCE BUCKINGHAM.--25-8--MAY 3, 1934.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
CLARENCE BUCKINGHAM-DELINEATOR-MAY 3, 1934

SOUTH ELEVATION AS ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED